

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 IGA-02 PC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00 MCT-01 SY-05
COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 CIEP-01 /084 W
-----081350Z 113887 /41

P R 081230Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9211
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
USSOUTHCOM
AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA
AMCONSUL CALI
AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, PINT, ECON, CO
SUBJECT: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. THE PARALYSIS WHICH TRADITIONALLY SEIZES COLOMBIA'S PUBLIC ACTIVITIES FROM MID-DECEMBER THROUGH MID-JANUARY DID NOT EXTEND TO TERRORISM. BOMBINGS AND KIDNAPPINGS PUNCTUATED THE YEAR'S END. PRESIDENT LOPEZ PROPOSED ELECTORAL REFORM IN A TELEVISED MESSAGE TO THE NATION. A SHARP INCREASE IN THE MONETARY SUPPLY WILL MAKE DIFFICULT A REDUCTION IN INFLATION IN THE NEAR FUTURE. MINIMUM WAGE LEVELS WERE INCREASED EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1. END SUMMARY.

2. TERRORISM CONTINUES THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS. FOLLOWING AN ANONYMOUS TELEPHONE TRIP, SECURITY FORCES DISCOVERED A PLASTIC EXPLOSIVE, TOGETHER WITH A NOTE OF EXTREME LEFTIST STAMP, ON AN AVIANCA FLIGHT AT BOGOTA'S EL DORADO AIRPORT ON JANUARY 4. SINCE THE DETONATOR DEVICE WAS NOT CONNECTED TO THE
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PLASTIC, AN EXPLOSION MAY NOT HAVE BEEN INTENDED. NEVERTHELESS, THIS MARKS THE FIRST APPEARANCE IN COLOMBIA OF PLASTIC EXPLOSIVE, OF WHICH THE EMBASSY IS AWARE AND MAY REPRESENT THE INTRODUCTION OF A NEW ELEMENT IN TERRORISM. ALSO IN BOGOTA BOMBS WERE EXPLODED AT THE SUPREME COURT BUILDING ON DECEMBER 31 AND AT A BANK ON DECEMBER 30, CAUSING DAMAGE TO DOORS AND WINDOWS BUT NO CASUALTIES. AT LEAST

SIX ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENT OF SECURITY (DAS) AGENTS WERE WOUNDED IN BOGOTA ON JANUARY 6 IN AN UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT TO CAPTURE KIDNAPPERS COLLECTING A ONE MISSION PESO RANSOM FROM A KIDNAP VICTIM'S HUSBAND, WHO WAS UNAWARE OF DAS' INTENTIONS. THE KIDNAPPERS ESCAPED WITH THE MONEY AND DAS' ACTION MAY HAVE JEOPARDIZED THE SAFE RETURN OF THE VICTIM. IN MEDELLIN ON JANUARY 5, POLICE FRUSTRATED AN ATTEMPT TO KIDNAP TWO BUSINESSMEN, KILLING ONE OF THE WOULD BE KIDNAPPERS. THE INTENDED VICTIMS, BROTHERS, WERE WOUNDED IN THE SHOOT-OUT.

3. PRESIDENT LOPEZ' YEAR-END MESSAGE. DURING A 20-MINUTE TELEVISED ADDRESS ON DECEMBER 30 IN WHICH HE REVIEWED THE NATIONAL PANORAMA, PRESIDENT LOPEZ EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE APPROACHING 1978 ELECTION CAMPAIGN, URGED THE VARIOUS LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE PARTY FACTIONS TO COALESCE AND SAID HE WOULD PROBABLY CALL A SPECIAL SESSION OF CONGRESS TO REFORM THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM IN TIME FOR THE 1978 CAMPAIGN (BOGOTA 86).

4. THE BUDGET, MONEY AND INFLATION. IN SPITE OF THE FIRST YEAR-END TREASURY SURPLUS SINCE 1968, THE MONEY SUPPLY INCREASED WILDLY DURING DECEMBER, ENDING THE YEAR WITH AN INFLATIONARY 36 PERCENT INCREASE. THIS SHARP MONETARY EXPANSION WILL MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO REDUCE INFLATION IN THE NEAR FUTURE AND HAS LED THE NEW FINANCE MINISTER TO PROMOTE A NEW SERIES OF ANTI-INFLATIONARY POLICIES AS SOON AS HE HAD A CHANCE TO CONSULT WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR. THERE WERE RUMORS THIS WEEK THAT THE ELIMINATION OF EXCHANGE CONTROLS WOULD BE AMONG THE MEASURES, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BUT THE MINISTER HAS SAID "NOT FOR NOW".

5. MINIMUM WAGE LEVELS RAISED. MINIMUM WAGE LEVELS FOR URBAN AND RURAL WORKERS IN COLOMBIA WERE AUTOMATICALLY INCREASED EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1. THIS INCREASE WAS THE SECOND OF A THREE STAGE MINIMUM WAGE SCALE PROGRAM PUT INTO EFFECT BY THE GOC LAST JULY (76 BOGOTA 7987). THE NEW MINIMUM WAGES FOR MAJOR URBAN AREAS IS NOW 1,770 PESOS A MONTH (\$50.50), 1,650 PESOS (\$47.10) FOR SMALLER URBAN AREAS, AND 1,500 PESOS FOR RURAL AREAS. THE THIRD STEP IN THE GOC'S MINIMUM WAGE PROGRAM WILL TAKE EFFECT JULY 31, WHEN THE THREE WAGE SCALES WILL BE INCREASED TO 1,860 IN PRINCIPAL CITIES, 1,740 IN SECONDARY CITIES, AND 1,590 IN RURAL AREAS.

6. GEOSYNCHRONOUS ORBITAL SOVEREIGNTY. A COLOMBIAN FONOFF OFFICIAL CONFIRMED TO US THAT THE GOC WOULD RAISE THE ISSUE OF NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE GEOSYNCHRONOUS ORBIT AT THE WORLD ADMINISTRATIVE RADIO CONFERENCE (WARC) IN GENEVA. WHETHER COLOMBIA WILL ATTEMPT TO HAVE THE WARC

TAKE A POSITION ON THE ISSUE WILL PROBABLY DEPEND ON THE
CLIMATE OF OPINION AT THE WARC (BOGOTA 150).
SANCHEZ

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Message Attributes

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Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 08-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
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Disposition Action: RELEASED
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